

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows. The claims are in the format as required by 35 C.F.R. § 1.121.

1. (Currently amended) A method embodied in a computer-readable medium for searching for a selected role within a hierarchical organizational structure comprising:
  - (a) identifying the selected role for which the search will be conducted and identifying a first position within the organizational structure from which the search will be started;
  - (b) after identifying the selected role and the first position, identifying a second position which is immediately above the first position in the organizational structure;
  - (c) making a determination whether the second position is associated with the selected role and terminating the search when the second position is associated with the selected role and searching positions below the second position in the organizational structure when the second position is not associated with the selected role;
  - (d) identifying a third position above the second position and repeating (c) from the third position when the selected role is not found among the positions below the second position in the organizational structure; and
  - (e) repeating (d) until the selected role is found; and
  - (f) when the selected role is found, saving and/or displaying the selected role.
2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the method is initiated as part of a selected business process, wherein the selected role is associated with performance of a required function in the completion of the business process, and wherein identifying the first position comprises identifying a position initiating the business process.
3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising identifying the selected role, wherein identifying the selected role comprises determining which of a plurality of roles is required to authorize a business process and identifying a role which is required to authorize the business process as the selected role.
- 4-5. (Canceled)
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein one or more of the roles associated with positions in the hierarchical organizational structure is not unique.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein the selected role is associated with a plurality of unique positions within the organizational structure.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein positions below the second position in the organizational structure are searched in accordance with a predetermined pattern.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising defining the organizational structure as a hierarchical structure and defining a hierarchical role structure within which the roles associated with the positions are organized, wherein the hierarchical role structure is distinct from the hierarchical organizational structure.
10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises at least one of the structures consisting of: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.
11. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises at least two of the structures consisting of: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.
12. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.
- 13-17. (Canceled)
18. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the selected role comprises a first selected role and wherein the method further comprises searching for a second selected role.
19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein searching for the first and second selected roles comprises repeating (a) - (d) for each of the first and second selected roles.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein searching for the first and second selected roles comprises concurrently searching for the first selected role and the second selected role.

21-34. (Canceled)

35. (Previously presented) A software product comprising a computer-readable medium having instructions embodied therein configured to cause a computer to perform a method for searching for approval roles within a hierarchical organizational structure including:

identifying one or more approval roles, wherein for each of the approval roles, approval of a person in a position associated with the approval role is required for completion of a business process; and

searching for a person associated with each approval role by

(a) identifying a second position in the hierarchical organizational structure which is immediately above a first position associated with the business process,

(b) making a determination whether the second position is associated with the approval role and

terminating the search when the second position is associated with the approval role and

searching positions below the second position in the hierarchical organizational structure if when the second position is not associated with the approval role,

(c) identifying a third position above the second position and repeating (b) with the second position substituted for the first position and the third position substituted for the second position when the approval role is not found among the positions below the second position in the organizational structure; and

(d) repeating (c) until the approval role is found.

36. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 35, further comprising delivering a notification to the identified person associated with each approval role.

37. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein the method further comprises suspending completion of the business process until authorization for the business process is obtained from the identified person associated with each approval role.

38. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein the first position is a position associated with a person initiating the business process.

39. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein identifying the approval roles required for completion of the business process comprises determining from a definition of the business process the one or more roles whose approval is required for the business process to be completed.

40. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein the approval roles comprise two or more approval roles.

41. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein the approval roles are non-unique, and wherein the identified person associated with each approval role is one of a plurality of persons who are associated with the approval role.

42. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein each approval role includes a functional role, a superiority role, and a legal role.

43. (Previously presented) The software product of claim 36, wherein each approval role includes at least two of the group consisting of: a functional role; a superiority role; and a legal role.